

# BUSINESS

## Computing

# County Web page gathers praise

Local governments take a lot of criticism quite often around these parts. But once in a while they do something that's hard to complain about.

To see what I'm talking about, check out the Maricopa County Information Center on the World Wide Web. You can find it at [www.maricopa.gov](http://www.maricopa.gov).

The site, which can be browsed in either low- or high-graphics fashion, provides public access to quite a bit of useful information — something I was pleasantly surprised to see.

An opening screen offers links to county records, elections information, recreational activities, jobs, law enforcement, tax information, details about permits and licenses, planning and zoning, maps and lots more.

All that gushing aside, there is a part of the site that's been generating some whining among Valley computer users.

Many people, including local Re-

## CYBER TRAVEL



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altors, celebrated when the county Recorder's Office made it possible July 1 to view images of actual recorded documents online.

But they complain that the system isn't easier to use. Viewing documents requires the use of a special browser plugin called Watermark WebSeries Viewer 1.0. And it only works with Windows 95 and Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

Charlie Downs, webmaster for the state Department of Real Estate, said he had trouble viewing documents, and had heard from a number of local real estate people with

similar troubles.

Barbara Frerichs, webmistress for the Recorder's Web site, said as far as she knows, anyone who's had trouble has tried to access documents using a Macintosh, a Macintosh emulating a PC or a PC running something other than Windows 95.

Other problems have occurred, she said, because a few companies in the Valley have taken to using the site all day long, which hogs the Web site's resources and blocks others from accessing documents.

Frerichs said she's working with limited resources to perfect the system, but it will take time. Sometime soon, she hopes to address the Macintosh issue and possibly institute fees for commercial access to the site.

## Have modem, will travel

Here's some of the latest Web sites to check out:

- Feeling hot? Try cooling off at the official Popsicle site. You can find it at [www.popsicle.com](http://www.popsicle.com). There are games, a "Popsicle Post Office," trivia and lots to waste time on. Big downside: the site is

slow.

- The Internet now makes it possible to tap into the wide world of the American Civil Liberties Union. The group's online Freedom Network can be found at [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org). You can check the latest ACLU issues nationally or in individual states. Special topic areas range from church and state to workplace rights.

The ACLU also operates an area on America Online (use keyword: **aclu**) and runs an automated mailing list. Information on the latter is available at the Web site.

- A few weeks ago, I wrote about an America Online feature that allows users to send instant messages to anyone on the Internet. Since then, I've heard from a few readers who use a similar technology from Mirabilis.

The product is called ICQ, and is available in versions that operate under Windows 3.11, Windows 95, Windows NT and the Macintosh. I didn't have time to try it before this column's deadline, but it appears to have won praise from a wide vari-

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